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Light imagery in Tess Gallagher's Amplitude. New and selected poems. "So foul and fair a play" : doubleness in Shakespeare's Macbeth

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Light Imagery in Tess Gallagher's *Amplitude: New and Selected Poems*

"So foul and fair a play": Doubleness in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

by

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Abstract

This paper examines the poet's use of light images such as starlight, fire, and daylight as they are used in her poems to symbolize immortality, emotions, imagination, and memories.

Light can take many shapes and forms; sunlight, moonlight, and candlelight, just to name a few. We rely on light to guide us through what would normally be darkness and nighttime. It provides heat and energy in some practical forms, and can be considered divine and spiritual in emotional forms. In Tess Gallagher's *Amplitude: New and Selected Poems,* light imagery appears in many different forms: starlight, fire, and daylight, and is generated by the poet's memories and heart; all light images have emotional meanings. Throughout the many books in the collection, *Instructions to the Double, Under Stars, Willingly, and New Poems* , Gallagher remains consistent in her use of imagery and what it symbolizes. The authors of Contemporary Literary Criticism claim there is ". . .a plethora of reflecting entities, including mirrors, bodies of water, eyes, shadows, and photographs" throughout the collection which strengthen the light imagery (Matuz et al 115).

Besides being a degree of largeness or fullness, the word amplitude is a scientific term pertaining to the stars and their distances at the times of rising and setting. Gallagher uses the stars and their light to spark her imagination and memory in many of her poems. "Tess Gallagher's *Under Stars* . . . evokes common place images and events and renders a familiar world in beautifully precise terms" (Oates 103-04). Joyce Carol Oates is speaking of stars and their common position in our lives. For Gallagher, they provide inspiration, insight, and memory from which to write. They are her creative force, her history. Although "Under Stars" appears first in the collection, "With Stars" is chronologically first. The poem is a childhood memory of Gallagher and her mother reading the stars when she cannot sleep. The contrast between darkness and light imagery becomes apparent as the poem unfolds.

"My mother speaks from the dark--why / haven't I closed my eyes" (161 l. 1-2). In this beginning, Gallagher shows the close relationships she has with her mother whose soft, saving voice emerges from the dark and pacifies the young Gallagher. Like many children, Gallagher is afraid of the dark and, for comfort and consolation, is guided to the starlight by her mother. During this night her mother exposes the true meaning of the stars and reveals their magical power: "I am four years old and / a star has the power of wishes. / We stare out together, but she sees past / their fierce shimmering sameness, each / point of light the emblem / of some lost, remembered face" (161 l. 5-10). The magic is her memory and imagination, learned from her mother. Perhaps her mother had the makings of a poet? The stars are people she has known and never known, their light the lives of these people. "Then her gaze sifts the scattered brilliance. / Her hand goes out-- 'There! that one!' so / her own mother, dead years back, looks down / on us. Sleep then like a hammer / among the orbiting dead" (161 l. 13-17).

This connection between Gallagher and the stars' light is reestablished and rekindled in "Under Stars" as, many years later, she remembers what the stars' light means. Under their light and therefore guided by it, she walks home one night. As she looks up, the stars spark lost memories of people and rejuvenate her imagination. While looking up at their light, she thinks they are in the same pattern she saw during her childhood:

> . . . I will think of you, you / who are so far away / you have caused me to look up at the stars. / Tonight they have not moved / from childhood, those games played after dark. / Again I walk into wet grass toward the starry voices. Again, I am the found one, intimate, returned / by all I touch on the way (67 l. 16-24).

The stars' lights are a beautiful reminder of the people who came before her, like her mother in this poem, whom she recreates in poetry. The last two lines of the poem unmask yet another meaning for the starlight. Gallagher sees the stars as people fixed in the heavens, immortalized forever in the night sky. As she heads back to town, she wonders how she will be immortal and if she will be immortal . "I am the found one, intimate, returned / by all I touch on the way." "In these shrewd stanzas, where the very solidity of the scene creates a wall between present and future, the reader and poet negotiate their relationship. How does anyone make his or her mark, it asks, in this marked-up world" (Karp 407-421).

The stars' light has the same meaning in "I Save Your Coat But You Lose It Later" and show the strong connection Gallagher has maintained with the stars even in adulthood when most or all childhood beliefs have been demystified and forgotten. The poet and her friend are going to the planetarium one afternoon, perhaps so she can teach him the same stars' meaning her mother taught her so many years ago. "We got off near the planetarium and were / heading for stars. Just to make one eye do / the work of two and bring back ghost-light was making us forgetful" (85 l. 9-12). That ghost-light is the memory of the dead who Gallagher has learned to remember and immortalize by looking up. When she cannot do it because it is not night time, she travels to the planetarium to do it during the day. After all, it is essential she sustain the relationship that coexists between herself and the stars so that she can continue calling on them for inspiration and remembrance.

However, Gallagher's discussion of stars and their meaning is taken one step further as their light is personified and embodied by "Rijl," her little

girl. It is fitting that Tess Gallagher has named her daughter after a star since the stars are as much a part of her as her child. "To be a child named after a star / is to be given earth and heaven too, never / to find the dark unpossessive where you stand, / enraptured to the ground" (189 l. 1-4). Rijl is then the best of both worlds: the earth and the heavens; the living and the dead; the dark and the light; the past and the present; the scientific and the mythical. Gallagher recreates the legends of the stars and witnesses the heroes, gods, and goddesses reincarnated in people on the street:

> Foot of the Giant, Rijl al Musalsalah--Foot of the Woman / in Arabic, Heaven's Great General to / the Chinese who invented lotus feet for their women . . . Such a walker / I saw once near the Forbidden Palace / in Beijing, accompanied by her granddaughter. / Their hobbled steps still fresh to the mind that knows / there were poets who praised this exchange of pain / for beauty. I stumble among these duller earth-stars / to hang giants of another kind, so that from your sky / overflowing with immortals, you will look down / as we look up, to feel distance as kinship, splendor / as the white heads of our mothers (189 l. 4-20).

She also sees the connection between her stars and the legends in different cultures. The stars she sees every night are also the same stars others see and create stories about. Every culture has a Rijl, but she focuses on the girl named for the star and the imagery surrounding her:

> . . .[C]hild, sweep up the room, and / dancing with your arms over your head, command / to be joined, for yours is a double star, white-hot / and tinged with blue. . . . I turn, recalling a night when, dashing / from the house, she refused her sweater, calling back / for us all, 'Don't you know I'm / a star? Don't you know / I'm burning up?' (190 l. 32-45).

The child in the poem feels as carefree and bright as her namesake star, yet aware of her mortality in the last line of the poem. According to Gallagher's

theories about the stars and the game she plays with her mother at bedtime, even when she dies she, too, will be immortalized in the heavens with the rest of the dead, shining down on mortals to mark her place in the universe. Gallagher is very much aware that some day she will be positioned next to her within the same amplitude.

In speaking of the memory in terms of light, Robert Lowell, fellow American poet, compares it to fire. "So 'memory,' Helen Vendler recalls Lowell saying at a reading, 'is genius.' And a slow fire, too, it rankles and burns, moving us to conclusions, some terrible, beyond memory" (Boruch 39-41). Light created by fire is also a central image in *Amplitude* as Gallagher recalls a passionate afternoon in "Crepes Flambeau." Memory is sparked through the usage of fire but in this particular poem Gallagher does not stumble onto something terrible but rather pleasing. The poet and her friends are surrounded by flames and their array of colors while eating a hot dessert served by a "hot" waiter in sweltering Texas. The location of the poem is very important because of the fiery climate. The poet herself begins by explaining and identifying her setting. "We are three women eating out / in a place that could be California / or New Jersey but is Texas. . ." (95 l. 1-3). Fire and the sweet dessert become a sensual aphrodisiac in the poem as the three women flirt innocently with the young waiter who has a "nice butt" (95 l. 7). As the aphrodisiac in all of its juices is served, the entire restaurant seems to go up in flames. "The brandy / is aflare in a low blue hush and golden now and red where he spills / the brown sugar saved / to make our faces wear the sudden burst. . . Fire / falling into our laps, fire / like laughter behind his back. . . (95 l. 14-24). What started out as a female luncheon turns into an exciting afternoon of playful torment and sexual tension. The fiery teasing

continues, "Our lips / are red with fire and juices. / He knows we could go on / eating long into the night until the flames / run down our throats. 'Thank you,' / he says, handing us our check, knowing / among the ferns and napkins that he has pleased us. . ." (96 l. 28-35). Gallagher uses the common setting of a restaurant, napkins and all, to create a sexual encounter without physical contact but ripe with desire, and lit by the red, juicy flames.

Since the light emitted by fire can symbolize passion, desire, and sexuality in Gallagher's works, then the poem "Conversation with a Fireman from Brooklyn" from the same book as "Crepes Flambeau," *Willingly*, can easily be seen as a conversation between the fireman and Gallagher which uncovers the role of a woman, from the point of a view of a man, during and after the sexual act. At first reading, one might suppose the conversation is about women in traditionally male occupations and how they still are not thought of as equals and appear less feminine to the men in those jobs. However, the poem and its fiery references show a man's lack of respect for a woman to whom he has just made love. ". . .[B]ut what / they look like / *after* fighting a fire, well / they lose all respect." (97 l. 11-14). What follows is a reference to a woman covered with the sweat and possibly the semen of her lover:

> He's sorry, but / he looks at them / covered with the cinders of someone's / lost hope, and he feels disgust, he just / wants to turn the hose on them, they / are that sweaty and stinking, just like / him, of course, but not the woman he / wants, you get me (97 l. 15-22).

At the end of that line Gallagher asks if we, the audience "get it" because she wants to know if we understand the fire metaphor, which is too shocking for Gallagher to talk about in literal language. What happens during the course

of the lovemaking for this "fireman" or "desireman" is a transformation of his ideal, pure, feminine woman to a filthy, stained whore. The saddest part of Gallagher's conversation with the fireman is her realization that the woman the fireman speaks of wants to be part of this fiery world in order to be loved and wanted and to prove she can be part of this world. "[A]nd to come to that-- / isn't it too bad, to be despised / for what you do to prove yourself / among men / who want to love you, to love you, / love you" (97 l. 22-27). It is not a coincidence that Tess Gallagher chose the fireman to represent the role of the man in this poem because it is the job of a good poet to be deliberate in her word choice and to be consistent in her usage of imagery and symbols. Reading this on a literal level would allow for the switch of fireman to policeman, truck driver, or construction worker; however, reading the poem on a symbolic or imagistic level demonstrates Gallagher's creative use of the fireman and the fire-related words: ashes, cinders, and hose.

The light of flames is also a predominant image in "Bird--Window--Flying." The poet enters her woodhouse to discover a bird who has entered but cannot find its way out. It begins battering itself against the bay window despite the open door next to it. Gallagher assumes the bird will find its way and leaves to accomplish chores. When she returns it still has not found the freedom of the sky so she assists in freeing the bird. As in "Crepes Flambeau," this poem is about love and freedom; Gallagher says, "If I take a lover for every tree, I / will not have again such an opening as / when you flew from me. / I have gone in to build my fire. All / the walls, all the / wings of my house are burning. The flames of me, the long hair unbraiding" (83-4 l. 28-35). Gallagher uses light imagery to show both love for the bird and longing

to be with the bird. The taking down of the long hair, her flames, is a symbolic freeing of the soul in the bird through her.

In "Dim House, Bright Face," Gallagher uses light and darkness to convey mood and tone in the title but does not use light imagery in the poem. We as readers, are expected to understand the grief of the mother over her son's death in terms of darkness and light. Things that are dark are gloomy, spooky, dreary, and depressing. Death is usually associated with the dark, like the world of the dim house in this poem, dim because in his mother's mind a shadow of a boy who was snatched away by death before his time is looming over it. "She still cries over that dead child, / and for years would bring him up / with strangers who came to the house" (163 l. 1-3). Bringing up a dead member of the family always invites an uncomfortable tension in people who have come to visit for other reasons. Most people would not welcome this in a conversation, and would probably not visit again. Ironically, although a member of the world of the dead, the boy's face is the bright spot in the poem. Why? He is, according to Gallagher and her myth-making mother, a star in the night sky. He floats above as a celestial member who now provides light for the lovers and the lost. He is already immortalized but his mother wants to immortalize him again through stories and pictures. She only wants to speak of him and not the other members of her family:

> So she softened his ongoing future in her heart / with their unreceivable comfort. Took / back the photograph and put it / in the drawer, as if to shield him from their inrushing eagerness to hear of those other faces on the mantle, / the ones who can't know yet what living / was (163 l. 15-22).

The mother in the poem considers his face the one bright spot in her dim life

and the one spot of light in a house consumed by grief. When thought of in this way, his picture on the mantel is like a light at the end of a dark tunnel.

Perhaps the poem that uses the most light imagery and speaks of the importance of light most richly in Gallagher's poetry is "Reading Aloud," a poem about two blind men (one losing his sight, the other born blind) and the loss of light. In this poem, Gallagher plays with light and its connection to memory and the illumination of the world through language, the important tool of the poet. Because light is a life source, Gallagher uses a simile pertaining to growth to explain her friend David's loss of sight. "You were slipping from our days / like an opposite ripeness, still clinging / to the light" (104 l. 10-12). His desire to be near the light he had always known leaves him unsympathetic toward the blind man who was born blind and never had the opportunity to experience precious light. " 'What did he lose? Noises, that's all / he knows,' you said, would have no comfort / or instruction" (104 l. 20-22). Ironically, in the midst of sorrow and grief for a man losing his sight Gallagher celebrates the imagination and sensitivity of the blind man to whom she reads, as well as the examination and magnification of words and what they bring to mind when spoken:

> . . . [T]he words that are the fountain sounds of the mind / causing light to fall inside itself over / the missing shapes of the world. 'What do you think / when I say 'wings?' I asked once. 'Angels, / birds he / said, and I saw he could fly / with either. Once, about diamonds, / 'Their light / a hiss in the rain / when the cars pass' (104 l. 24-31).

Gallagher, the poet, is the ideal person to read the language aloud because she feels responsible for a word's connotation and animation. Her language and voice provide the light that illuminates the missing shapes of the world and allows the picture in the imagination to be painted. She admits this job of a

poet was her gift at birth, "I was born that way, / some beak of light lifting a straw" (23 l. 10-11).

Through words the poet also lights the mountains behind her house for her sightless friend in such a way that he will understand even in his dark world:

> When the light was shutting down on you / I said,
> 'Behind my home is a palace of mountains.' / I wanted
> you to see them, regal / in their shawls of snow above
> the working houses / of the town. I told them to you / the way a
> mother tells death to a child, so it seems / possible to go there
> and stay, leaving everyone / behind, saying softly, 'Everyone's
> coming / so it's only a little while alone (104 l. 1-9).

Again she is creating a world with her language and lighting the bleak world of the blind man with her descriptions and beacon of language. She also seems to be calming his fears of the dark and the death it represents.

Gallagher and her blind friend David again share a connection when they cross a "moss-slick log" that crosses a river (105 l. 41). The poet uses her voice and language to persuade and guide David over the treacherous drop. "I took your hand and put all my sight there, / balancing between trust and the swiftness / we could fall to, walking backwards / so my grip was steady . . . Who could go with us after that, though they joined us" (105 l. 46-58). Her language becomes his light and their adventure succeeds. Tess Gallagher uses this story as a metaphor for the power of the poet's illumination of reality, its clarity and realism. She describes the surroundings so well that even the blind man can be guided.

She thinks about their adventure years later and imagines a river and light as well as the pungent smell made stronger by blindness. ". . . I see a river under you / and always you are walking / into the shouting light of

water and again / the wet smell of cloth / as when someone has been lifted free / with their breath still in them" (105-6 l. 60-65). Gallagher also compares his blindness to a childhood memory of hers, ". . . when / with our hands we have rushed through the rooms, / adding darkness, adding the words mother, father, and no one answers" (106 l. 69-72). In this last stanza, Gallagher shows the fear, the panic in darkness which is contrasted by the brightness of her language and poetry.

Through starlight, flames, and light itself as language, Tess Gallagher builds a philosophy of life and death, illuminating ordinary situations by bringing them to life with brilliance and color, remembering feelings and emotions by assigning glowing objects to them. Although sometimes conventional, for example, using fire to show desire, Gallagher presents light and its importance and history in our lives, as imagination and its powers, as color and brightness. Tess Gallagher even considers memory to be light, immortalizing people to keep them. "Tonight it is the stars reminding / keeps me up past midnight. . . .But oh, if one falls, if-- / how can that child ever fall asleep / until sunrise?" (161--62 l. 18-34).

"So foul and fair a play": Doubleness in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Abstract

This paper examines the use of "doubleness" or duality in the play's language and character by focusing on Shakespeare's use of deceitful oxymorons, mask metaphors, the word "double," and the number two.

From the opening scene of *Macbeth*, where the witches chant together, "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (I.i.11), the reader must be alert to the double meaning or "doubleness" of that sentence and its implications for the rest of the play. "It was Coleridge who called the 'lyric' that opens *Macbeth* 'the key-note of the character of the whole play' " (Grove 117-18). The use of such oxymorons indicates that we may witness characters who will be double-crossed by double agents who are double-faced. The witches' opening oxymoron ". . . is a statement with a 'double sense,' one of which is paradoxical and extraordinary, another simple and reasonable" (Danson 133). By Act IV.i., we know that their oxymoronic expression is true, and we can better understand the meaning of the witches' chant, "Double, double, toil and trouble" (10). Doubleness is trouble, and the play is fraught with doubleness of language and character. "Doubleness" in *Macbeth* means duplicity and deceit between characters; it means a second personality emerging within the first, sometimes accompanied by the wearing of masks, so that the character is doubled; and finally the word "double" indicates both the concrete and the abstract, the language of number and of ambiguity. What you see is not always what you get, and what you get is not always what you see.

The actual word "double" is used several times in the play and is always used in a violent, powerful, or negative way. The first, second, and third time the word "double" appears, it is used as a metaphor to describe Macbeth and Banquo, the two mighty captains of Duncan's army. A sergeant returning from the battle between Scotland and Norway explains that when it looked as if Scotland were going to lose, Macbeth and Banquo rose to the occasion and "were / As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks, so they /

Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe" (I.ii. 36-38). Not only does this metaphor indicate that Banquo and Macbeth worked together or "doubly," but it also describes Macbeth as a weapon that has double the potency and power as well as double the strength, resistance, and persistence. He has the ability, when the odds are against him, to resurface and become something new. This is exactly what happens to his personality when he realizes there is no fair way to the throne that the witches predicted. He must become something new; thus Macbeth's double emerges.

The fourth appearance of the word "double" occurs in Act I. vi. when it is spoken by the devious Lady Macbeth who so graciously welcomes King Duncan to her home and promises him all of her services. Like the fly who stepped into the spider's parlor, Duncan is not aware of the irony and duplicity of her use of the word double: "All our service / In every point twice done, and then done double," (14-15). Lady Macbeth enjoys the knowledge that she possesses as far as Duncan's fate is concerned, and uses the word "double" deliberately. He will be double-crossed, and she knows this.

Macbeth is not present during Lady Macbeth's use of the word "double"; however, he uses it a few lines later to express his concern over the double-crossing betrayal of which he is to become a part. He is anxious about the fact that Duncan is walking innocently into a situation which appears one way, but is really another. He questions whether he is capable of murdering a person who is so trusting and recognizes his double responsibility in protecting Duncan: "He's here in double trust: / First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed; then, as his host, / Who should against his murtherer shut the door, / Not bear the knife myself"

(I.vii.12-16). Macbeth realizes his true double obligation here, but later his double self becomes the murderer anyway.

The Witches are the next to use the word double, doubly, when they chant "Double, double toil and trouble" (IV.i. 1). Since thus far their words have had meaning and truth, the reader must believe their warning that "doubleness" brings "toil" which is "something that binds, snares, or entangles one" (The American Heritage Dictionary 1275), and it also brings trouble.

Later in the play, during Act IV.i., Macbeth uses the word "double" for the eighth time in the play and uses it in the same way Lady Macbeth did when she welcomed Duncan to Inverness. After persuading the witches to show him his future a second time, Macbeth is warned to fear Macduff and anyone not born of woman. In an arrogant moment of power and pride, Macbeth exclaims, "Then live, Macduff, what need I fear of / thee? / But yet I'll make assurance double sure, / And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live, / That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies, / And sleep in spite of thunder" (82-86). Notice that Macbeth, although at first confident in this statement, quickly realizes that things must be doubly done in the Scotland he has created where nothing is certain and everything must be done once and then twice.

The last time the word "double" appears, it is used in a sentence that also contains the word palter. The word "palter" means to equivocate, to be ambiguous, to have more than one meaning or a double meaning. This time "double" appears in the last scene in which Macbeth is alive. After hearing Macduff declare that he was not born of woman in the typical sense, but was "from his mother's womb / untimely ripp'd," Macbeth says angrily:

"Accursed be that tongue that tells me so, / For it hath cow'd my better part of man! / And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd, / That palter with us in a double sense, / That keep the word of promise to our ear, / And break it to our hope" (V.viii. 15-22). Macbeth is aware at this point that one cannot rely on language or character which may be "double" or equivocating. He has been played with and manipulated by the "juggling fiends" who are the witches. He has been ensnared in their trap. Doubleness is trouble, and equivocation can only bring disaster.

In addition to the use of the actual word "double" in *Macbeth* , there is the language of double-crossing, the language of deceit. This language is generally used between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in regards to their murderous plans, but it is commented on by Duncan, Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm, and others who live in Macbeth's Scotland. This double language includes mask metaphors, the porter's speech on equivocation, oxymorons and the witches' predictions.

The language of doubleness and deceit is first introduced to the reader by the traitor to Scotland, the original Thane of Cawdor. According to rumor, one of the reasons that the Scottish were having a difficult time winning the war against Norway was due to the Thane of Cawdor's doubleness. He was a traitor, a double-agent, and conspired with the Norwegians to defeat Scotland. Upon finding this out, Duncan orders his immediate death and, troubled by the doubleness of the situation, declares the difficulty in detecting doubleness in men: "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face: / He was a gentleman on whom I built / An absolute trust" (I.iv. 12-15). According to this statement, the heart of a man and the face of a man can be two entirely different things; thus, doubleness is duplicity. Duncan realizes men can wear

masks, but ironically, he puts his trust in another double-faced duo by coming to Macbeth's castle to celebrate the victory over Norway and Macbeth's new title, Thane of Cawdor.

A similar sentiment is expressed by Lady Macbeth when she instructs Macbeth in exactly how they will fool Duncan with graciousness, while possessing murderous intentions in their heart. She tells Macbeth to wear a mask so that he may have a doubleness about him: "Your face, my thane, is as a book, where men / May read strange matters. To beguile the times, / Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye, / Your hand, your tongue; look like th' innocent flower, / but be the serpent under't" (I.v. 62-66).

Later, when Macbeth feels he cannot commit regicide, Lady Macbeth convinces him that he must have courage, and he must be a man. When he decides that the murder must come to pass and that he can do it with her by his side, he decides to be double-faced and claims Lady Macbeth's philosophy of mask wearing and doubleness as his own: "Away, and mock the time with fairest show: / False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (I. vii. 81-82). He will wear the face of a different heart; he conforms to doubleness.

After Duncan is killed, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth realize that he has brought the daggers from the murder scene and not left them as was the plan. When she instructs Macbeth to return the daggers, he vehemently says he cannot look on the scene again. Because nothing is as it seems in Lady Macbeth's mind, she explains to Macbeth that he can return because Duncan's dead body can be viewed in an alternate, double way: "The sleeping and the dead / Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil" (II.ii. 50-51). Duncan is not dead in this description, but wears the mask of sleep or a picture, he is but a "painted devil" that Macbeth should not fear.

When looking on him in this light, they can view their act as not gruesome or brutal, just as their evil hearts were not shown on their innocent, welcoming faces. Lady Macbeth places a mask on Duncan so that he does not seem what he really is. Despite her insistence that the "dead / Are but as pictures," she has been terribly affected by Duncan as he slept, seeing him in another double sense that prohibited her from killing him herself: "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done't" (II.ii. 12-13). This statement, in opposition to her first, makes their crime seem even worse; Duncan is a father-figure who is murdered by the children of his kingdom.

Macbeth, not Lady Macbeth, next instructs that their faces must be masks that hide their hearts' intentions. After Act III of the play, Macbeth is the one who understands the importance of doubleness if they are to maintain their royal status, and it is also Macbeth who knows that Banquo, his closest friend, will be able to see the crime on his face. He tells Lady Macbeth that they must continue with the doubleness of their demeanor when seeing Banquo: "And make our faces vizards to our hearts, / Disguising what they are" (III.ii. 33-34). Alex Aronson believes:

> "Masking the business from the common eye" (III.i. 125) becomes a compulsive end in itself, not necessarily even related to his appalling deed. The mask has to be preserved at all cost. Without it, life would become unbearable. Macbeth does not know that his "borrow'd robes" do not fit, and "hang loose about him, like a giant's robe / Upon a dwarfish thief" (V.ii. 21). What he, intuitively, perceives after the murder is that "to present an unequivocal face to the world is a matter of practical importance" and that therefore "the construction of an artificial personality becomes an unavoidable necessity." (61)

Both Donalbain and Malcolm, like their father, are aware that men can wear masks and therefore carry off a doubleness. Before separating from his

brother and fleeing to the safety of another country after their father's murder is discovered, Donalbain realizes that Duncan's men, those who surround him, wear the masks of friendliness and sympathy, but may suspect him and his brother of parricide. "To Ireland, I; our separated fortune / Shall keep us both the safer. Where we are, / There's daggers in men's smiles;" (II.iii. 138-40). Therefore, later when Macduff approaches Malcolm in England to return to Scotland to slay the feared Macbeth, Malcolm is hesitant to trust Macduff. After all, his father was murdered by Macbeth, and he is not eager to trust anyone approaching him from Scotland. As Macduff tries to convince him that he is not treacherous, Malcolm responds: "That which you are my thought cannot transpose: / angels are bright still, though the brightest fell. / Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace, / Yet grace must still look so" (IV.iii. 31-34). According to Malcolm, the appearance of virtue can hide villainy, but the appearance of virtue may also be genuine. The difficulty is detecting which is which.

The last characters to wear masks and partake in doubleness are the English soldiers, led by Macduff and Malcolm, when they mask themselves with branches from Birnam wood and move toward Macbeth's castle disguised as the great forest. As the witches foretold, Macbeth would not be defeated until "Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him" (IV.i. 93-94). When the English forces reach Birnam wood, Malcolm knows the importance of deceiving the great deceiver, Macbeth, and explains that the soldiers must have a doubleness about them if they are to fool Macbeth. Like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's earlier speeches on the importance of looking one way but being another, he orders the army: "Let every soldier hew him down a bough, / And bear't before him, thereby shall

we shadow / The numbers of our host, and make discovery / Err in report of us" (V.iv. 4-7). In other words -- Lady Macbeth's to be exact -- "look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpeant under't"(I.v. 65-66).

The Porter who opens Act III, a drunken man who seemingly has no wit or common sense, knows more than anyone in the play that there is a danger in the language of doubleness. In his comic fashion, he discusses equivocation, the use of words and phrases which can possess double meanings in order to mislead. The irony of the Porter's scene is that his comments about who might be entering the castle can all be applied to the people who live in the castle. So in this speech, he can be referring to one person or profession, but also to Macbeth. "Knock, knock, knock! Who' there, in th' other / devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could / swear in both the scales against either scale, who com-/mitted treason enough for God's sake, yet could / not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator" (III.i. 7-11). The equivocator is already inside and has in his deceitful speeches sworn one scale against the other in promising to protect Duncan while planning to kill him, and inviting Banquo to dine in the evening while planning his murder during the day. In planning these things, he has committed treason, but cannot fool heaven with his double talk, though he has fooled many others. William O. Scott, in his article entitled "Macbeth's--And Our--Self-Equivocations" says that "[t]he assignment of truth to one's statements about one's own truthfulness or falsity is a perilous business"(160). He believes that Shakespeare steeped the play *Macbeth* with double-meanings and equivocations because of the politics of the times involving the Jesuit priests and their doctrine of equivocation which allowed them to answer difficult questions involving the activities of priests with hidden, double

meanings. Of Shakespeare's canon Scott writes, "...Shakespeare had (for what it is worth) a rich storehouse of unsupported and easily undermined oaths, and self-referring and self-canceling speech" (163).

Equivocation or doubleness, which is a double-edged sword, is exposed when the Porter talks of alcohol being the great equivocator; however, his words can easily be applied to the character of Macbeth and his ignorance of the equivocations of the witches in their prophecies: "it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him / on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and dis-/ heartens him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in / conclusion equivocates him in a sleep, and giving him / the lie, leaves him" (III.i. 32-36).

This discussion of equivocation and double-meaning comes at an appropriate time in the play and helps to clarify the several oxymorons in the witches' predictions and characters' comments at the beginning and end of the play. The use of oxymoron, a figure of speech wherein incongruous and contradictory terms are combined, sets the tone for the doubleness of the play. The witches' chant in the opening scene, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I.i. 11) clearly shows duality and contradiction. What is good is also bad, and what is bad is also good. This statement introduces the terms of the play: doubleness and deceit. This oxymoronic expression is soon repeated by Banquo as he and Macbeth make their way home from battle: "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I.iii. line 38). It is a good day, but also a bad day simultaneously. There is a sad happiness to the day, a defeated victory, a bad goodness. This is very true, in fact, because their lives are about to change with the witches' prophecies and hidden, double meanings.

The witches possess a doubleness that Banquo and Macbeth are hard-pressed to understand. When first approaching them, Banquo is unsure of

what he sees, are they earthlings or aliens? alive or dead? men or women? His questions are loaded with doubleness and uncertainty:

> _What are
> these
> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th'inhabitants o'th' earth,
> And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
> That man may question? You seem to understand me,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so. (I.iii. 45-47)

This dueling language introduces the witches' oxymoronic visions for Banquo: "Lesser than Macbeth, and greater. / Not so happy, yet much happier. / Thou shalt get kings, though thou be / none" (I.iii. 65-67). These words are laden with impossibilities and double-meaning and maintain the witches' promises of fairness and foulness existing together.

After hearing both the witches' predictions and Ross's announcement that he is the new Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth is filled with contradictory feelings that the witches' oxymorons conjure up. He feels both good and bad, both fair and foul:

> This supernatural soliciting
> Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,
> Why hath it given me earnest of success,
> Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? (I.iii. 130-137)

Macbeth feels both fear and excitement simultaneously and seems to be asking, "If this is bad, why do I feel good, and if this is good, why do I feel bad?" The contradiction within himself begins, and leads to an eventual

splitting of his personality so that both a good Macbeth and an evil Macbeth co-exist.

The Old Man of Act II.iv asks Macduff to change the doubleness of Scotland after Duncan is murdered. He wants one or the other, fair or foul; good or bad. After explaining that he has never seen such a strange night, a night that did not turn to day, so that day was night and night was day, he wishes Macduff the best and tells him to make the foulness fair and all enemies friends. He, too, understands the importance of literal meaning and the dangers of doubleness: "God's benison go with you, and with /those / That would make good of bad, and friends of foes!" (40-41).

It is with this blessing that Macduff leaves for England to make good of bad and to befriend Malcolm, the supposed murderer of his father. His sudden disappearance leaves even Lady Macduff doubtful about what is real and what is not. She wonders if her husband is a double-agent because of his sudden flight from Scotland and describes the "doubleness" of Macduff's character: "His flight was madness. When our actions do not, / Our fears do make us traitors" (IV.ii. 3-4). She is not sure if her husband is a traitor and fears that he may have been wearing a mask like Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. Lady Macduff does not think that her husband had a traitor's heart, but his actions show him to be a traitor. When talking to Ross about the predicament of raising her son on her own, she uses the same strange, double language of the witches: "Father'd he is, and yet he's fatherless" (IV.ii. 26).

Like Lady Macduff, her husband is also faced with discerning whether or not things are as they appear. After pursuing Malcolm to England hoping that he would be the balm that the diseased Scotland required, he is faced with Malcolm, a man who seems to have taken on a new personality.

Macduff believes him to be good, but Malcolm explains himself in evil terms. This, however, is a test of Macduff's honesty and loyalty. Malcolm explains that he lied about himself; he is not evil, but rather sympathetic to Macduff's pleas. After hearing Malcolm's self-presentation followed quickly by a contradicting one, Macduff responds with an oxymoron that sounds like the witches: "Such welcome and unwelcome things at once / 'Tis hard to reconcile" (IV.iii. 38-39).

As Macbeth's monarchy slowly falls around him, the men who used to support him no longer do. They have gone to the other side and anxiously await the arrival of Malcolm and Macduff. In discussing the state of Scotland and its falling leader, Angus uses an oxymoronic simile to describe Macbeth: "Now does he feel his title / Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe / Upon a dwarfish thief" (V.ii. 20-22).

And like the dwarfish-thief described by Angus, Macbeth is not able to wear the borrowed robes of the great King Duncan. Before his final struggle to survive and prove the witches wrong, Macbeth's character is temporarily diminished, like Angus' description, "a dwarfish thief" and is reduced to almost nothing as he realizes he cannot fight off England, he has lost his wife, and the witches' predictions have come true. He concludes that his life means nothing, and that life itself is both "fair and foul" and therefore makes sense and does not make sense simultaneously. "It is a tale / Told by idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (V.iv. 26-28). Life, for Macbeth, is filled with sanity and insanity; fairness and foulness. This is the last such double-meaning statement in the play and the most important. The witches were right: good exists with evil and evil lurks in even the greatest of hearts.

In addition to the use of the word "double" in Macbeth, there are many

characters who develop a second personality within themselves, a double so to speak. Some of these characters also exchange personalities or wish to, so that often they are speaking to their doubles, the character they used to be, or want to be. So, it is from within Macbeth's once good heart, that his evil double emerges. One could say that he has married his evil double; a powerful, masculine woman who is competitive, bright, and resourceful, and although this may be true, his evil double also springs from within.

At the beginning of the play, the highest accolades are paid to Macbeth. He is a valiant soldier, a thane to the King, and a loving, fair husband, but the fairness of the moment is a prelude to foulness. After Macbeth hears of his future royalty, he realizes that he must have it, that he cannot be happy without making the witches' predictions real: "...[N]othing is / But what is not" (I.iii. 141-142). At this point, his evil double emerges. So it is with Lady Macbeth, who with an evil heart and an ambitious mind, begins to plan the death of Duncan and the rise of Macbeth after she reads about Macbeth's encounter with the paltering witches. Lady Macbeth becomes a double of the witches in order to summon the courage to commit evil. In a haunting and eerie soliloquy, she conjures up the evil spirits of the night to make her something new, an evil force who will not feel or care. She wants a double created of herself so that she may operate outside of herself and her conscience:

> The raven himself is hoarse
> That croaks the fàtal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
> Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between

Th' effect and [it]! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,
Wherever in you sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry, "Hold, hold!" (I.v. 38-54).

With this request to the evil powers, she becomes a double for the witches in order to summon the courage to kill, a role that Macbeth also assumes when planning Banquo's death:

Macbeth. There's comfort yet, they are assailable.
Then be thou jocund; ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecat's summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

Lady Macbeth. What's to be done?

Macbeth. Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow
Makes wing to th' rooky wood;
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marvel'st at my words, but hold thee still:
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.
(III.ii. 39-55)

The reason Lady Macbeth seems to marvel at Macbeth's words, as he says in line 54, is because she is looking at her double. Until now, she did the evil planning and gave the murderous instructions. The teacher becomes the

student. Macbeth's true evil double has risen from himself, and he has gone from passive to aggressive, whereas, Lady Macbeth, once the aggressor, has been forced into the passive role. He no longer needs Lady Macbeth or the witches; Macbeth can make things come true himself without help or instructions from anyone. Aronson says that what Macbeth ". . . does not and cannot know, is that 'this painfully familiar division of consciousness into two figures, often preposterously different, is an incisive psychological operation that is bound to have repercussions on the unconscious' and may become 'a very fruitful source of neuroses,' because 'a man cannot get rid of himself in favour of an artificial personality without punishment.' " (61).

It is often said that when husbands and wives are married for a long period of time, they become like each other, and some say they even begin to resemble each other. This phenomenon occurs in the play as Lady Macbeth and Macbeth switch personalities and become the double of each other. Macbeth has difficulty, at first, with the very idea of murder. He does not want to do it: it takes much persuasion on his wife's part, and he is aware, always, of how wrong his act is and how many laws it violates. After the murder is committed, Macbeth's evil creates a double of himself. He begins to take actions on his own, including the planning of Banquo, Fleance, and Lady Macduff's murders without the help of his wife, while Lady Macbeth sinks deeper and deeper within herself, and by the end of the play she resembles, in her sleep, the panicked and bloody-handed Macbeth after Duncan's murder.

There is a type of doubleness in wanting to become another character or exchange places with him. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth wish to become another; in this instance, they wish to be the dead King Duncan. In Act III.ii., they both express this wish. For Lady Macbeth, the toll of killing

and worrying about its consequences is too much to bear: "Naught's had, all's spent, / Where our desire is got without content. / 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy / Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy" (4-7). Macbeth agrees with this statement later, even though he was not aware that she had thought along similar lines:

> ...better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
> Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
> Can touch him further. (III.ii. 19-26)

When the two needed the courage to kill, they created another of themselves in order to do it, and when both are faced with what they have done they wish to be in an alternate state which is death, but only Lady Macbeth achieves this state by her own hands. Macbeth's life is taken from him.

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are not the only characters to create a second, double personality or to wish for one. Another is Malcolm, Duncan's son, when he claims he is testing Macduff's honesty in approaching him to return to Scotland. Malcolm, who no one has any reason to believe is anything but good and fair, is the son of a King whom Macbeth described as someone who "Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been / so clear in his great office, that his virtues / Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against / The deep damnation of his taking-off" (I.vii. 17-20). Nevertheless, when Macduff approaches Malcolm about the horrors in Scotland and the tyranny of Macbeth, Malcolm claims to be someone else, someone who cannot be trusted; thus, his evil double seems to emerge:

When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

Macduff. What should he be?

Malcolm. It is myself I mean; in whom I know
All the particulars of vice so grafted
That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Esteem him as a lamb, being compar'd
With my confineless harms. (IV.iii. 45-54).

Macduff, not knowing what to think of this sudden change in young Malcolm, cannot believe that someone could be worse than Macbeth, especially Malcolm. But nothing is as it appears in this play, and Macduff must take him at his word. When Malcolm makes his retraction at the end of the scene and tries to assure Macduff that he has not become an evil double, it is difficult, if not impossible, to forget the words he has said when comparing his evilness to Macbeth's:

I grant him bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name; but there's no bottom, none
In my voluptuousness. Your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up
The cestern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o'erbear
That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth
Than such an one to reign. (IV.iii. 58-66).

Of Malcolm's doubleness and equivocations William O. Scott writes, "These several comments reveal a problem the witness shares with Malcolm: once the possibility of falsehood or of hidden or oblique meanings is broached, it

becomes difficult to return to straightforward utterance (assuming there is such a thing) because that utterance will be subjected to the same suspicious interpretation as all the others" (162). Once a character assumes a doubleness in the play, he is subject to suspicion. One can forever wonder if Malcolm really meant some of the things he claims he lied about and if even the best of men has a double personality; certainly Macbeth does.

According to R.W. Desai in his article entitled, "Duncan's Duplicity," Duncan's doubleness can also be proved. In a controversial view of Duncan, who is normally considered kind, gentle, good, and fatherly, Desai says that Duncan also has ulterior motives and although seeming generous and grateful on the exterior for Macbeth's service in Scotland's victory, he intentionally double-crosses Macbeth when he passes him over in promising the throne to Malcolm and slights him by promising him payment for his services above and beyond the bestowed title of "Cawdor," a promise he does not follow through. Desai believes that because of Duncan's duplicity in these manners, Macbeth's decision to murder Duncan to achieve the throne, although wrong and evil, can be somewhat justified: "But what brings matters to a head is Duncan's pronouncement of his eldest son Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland, obviously a well calculated move to forestall the possibility of Macbeth, Duncan's first cousin, succeeding him to the throne" (26). Not even the murdered king is without doubleness in this reading.

Interestingly enough, the word "double" also means "ghost or apparition." So even Banquo, the character who decides not to act to make the witches' predictions for himself a reality, is doubled at the banquet scene. Whether or not the ghost of Banquo is real, Macbeth believes he sees it and therefore is seeing Banquo's double. He sees the likeness of Banquo, and

chides his doubleness, his life in death: "Avaunt, and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee! / Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold; / Thou hast no speculation in those eyes / Which thou dost glare with!" (III.iv 93-96). Macbeth continues his verbal attack on Banquo's double as he longs for the days when a man could kill another and not have to face his double: "The [time] has been, / That when the brains were out, the man would die, / And there an end; but now they rise again / With twenty mortal murthers on their crowns, / And push us from our stools" (III.iv. 77-81).

Despite its many abstract meanings and interpretations, doubleness can also refer to the number two. Although *Macbeth* is traditionally seen as a play dealing in three's, the number two figures prominently in the plot. There are two Thanes of Cawdor, the original and Macbeth; two mighty captains, Banquo, who takes the straight path in life, and Macbeth who "catches the nearest way"; Duncan has two sons, Malcolm, who returns to fight for his country, and Donalbain who stays away in Ireland; two seemingly guilty guards outside Duncan's chamber; two great battles; one with Norway that elevates Macbeth, one with England that destroys Macbeth; two meetings with the witches, one which promises Macbeth his future, one which promises his death; two mysterious figures who remain unexplained, the mysterious third murderer and the messenger that warns Lady Macduff of her eminent death; and the death of two kings, Duncan and Macbeth.

Although everything appears restored to order by the end of the play (Macbeth is killed and Malcolm has come to power), one can still be left with doubts about the validity and trustworthiness of Malcolm after his speeches to Macduff. His character has been doubled, and we have to wonder if he will also be a tyrant after a respite to convince everyone of his goodness. Of this

predicament, Scott says, "And if meanings may implicitly be tailored to the situation of the speaker and, like Macduff with Malcolm, we are heavily reliant on the speaker's own self-descriptions (again, words supported by words), both the nature and the veracity of what is being asserted must be seriously qualified" (162). While we are considering whether Malcolm is double in personality or complete, we also have to wonder about Banquo's son, Fleance, and his whereabouts. Even though Malcolm sits on the throne, it is to Fleance that the witches have promised the monarchy. The "two" sons left then are very much like the two characters who started the play: Macbeth and Banquo; one with the possibility of doubleness and the other who chose to let the witches' predictions come true on their own.

So the Old Man's blessings, "Make good of bad and friend of foes," (II.iv 41) *seems* realized by Malcolm. By the end of *Macbeth*, the doubleness is undone, if we do not worry about Malcolm's horrible self-descriptions, and there are promises of restoration, the calling home of fled friends, and future ceremonies where all will be honored by Malcolm. Scotland will no longer be a victim of equivocation and doubleness, for even Macbeth denounced its use in the scene where he dies: "And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd, / That palter with us in a double sense" (V.viii. 19-20).

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